

Message Text

PAGE 01 OECD P 13920 01 OF 02 191207 Z

42

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 NEA-10 ADP-00 RSR-01 AID-20 CEA-02

CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 INR-10 IO-12 NSAE-00

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R 190929 Z MAY 73

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9652

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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AMEMBASSY ROME

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PAGE 02 OECD P 13920 01 OF 02 191207 Z

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ECON, EFIN, OECD

SUBJECT: ECONOMIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING, MAY 17-18

REF: CPE(73)1,2 & 3; USOECD 11615 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: ECONOMIC POLICY COMMITTEE CONCENTRATED ON PROBLEM OF INFLATION AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT. ALTHOUGH ALL AGREED PROBLEM SERIOUS, EACH THOUGHT OWN POLICIES APPROPRIATE AND OTHERS MIGHT DO MORE. CALL FOR SIMULTANEOUS OR CONCERTED OECD ACTION RANG WRONG NUMBER WITH MOST DELS. BALANCE PAYMENTS SITUATION CONSIDERED BE SLOWLY IMPROVING, BUT TRANSIT TO EQUILIBRIUM LIKELY BE ROCKY AND REQUIRE CAREFUL POLICY MANEUVERING. END SUMMARY.

2. MAIN ISSUES: ECONOMIC POLICY COMMITTEE FOCUSED ON ASSESSMENT OF THREE MAIN ISSUES: (1) CURRENT BUOYANT ECONOMIC SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OVER NEXT YEAR; (2) POLICY MEASURES TO BRING INFLATIONARY PRESSURES UNDER CONTROL AND WHETHER IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR OECD MEMBERS TAKE CONCERTED ACTION TO DO THIS, AND (3) TRANSITION TO INTERNATIONAL PAYMENTS EQUILIBRIUM.

3. CURRENT SITUATION: MANY EPC MEMBERS AGREED WITH SECRETARIAT THEY WERE EXPERIENCING STRONG ECONOMIC PRESSURES, THAT LITTLE SPARE CAPACITY REMAINED AND EXCESS DEMAND WAS AN IMMINENT DANGER IN SOME COUNTRIES. THEY EXPECTED CONTINUED HIGH RATES GROWTH AND RISING PRICES. GERMANY PORTRAYED ITS SITUATION AS EVEN MORE ALARMING AND STRESSED IT WAS ALREADY NEAR 100 PER CENT CAPACITY UTILIZATION. SWITZERLAND AND SUSTRIA TRIED CONVINCING COMMITTEE THAT THEY WERE HELPLESS VICTIMS OF IMPORTED INFLATIONARY FORCES, LARGELY BEYOND THEIR CONTROL. NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES, SMALL AND LARGE, PLAYED UP ROLE OF IMPORTED INFLATION.

4. HOWEVER, LARGER COUNTRIES (US, UK, CANADA) IN GENERAL THOUGHT THEIR SITUATIONS WERE NOT AS SERIOUS AS SECRETARIAT SUGGESTED. US SAID IT HAD PASSED PEAK OF ACCELERATED GROWTH AND PRICE RISES, AND WAS MORE CONFIDENT THAN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 03 OECD P 13920 01 OF 02 191207 Z

SECRETARIAT ABOUT REDUCING ITS INFLATION RATE SIGNIFICANTLY WITH CURRENT FISCAL AND MONETARY POLICIES. UK AND ITALY - STILL RECOVERING FROM RECESSION - ARGUED THAT THEY STILL HAD EXCESS CAPACITY AND THEREFORE SAW NO REASON TO TRIM THEIR GROWTH TO LOWER LEVELS. BRITISH SAID HIGH GROWTH RATE WAS NECESSARY TO GET COOPERATION FROM LABOR AND INDUSTRY TO MAKE THEIR NEW PRICE- INCOMES POLICIES WORK EFFECTIVELY AND TO REPLACE OBSOLETE INVESTMENT. CANADA NOTED IT HAD ONLY RECENTLY INTRODUCED MORE RESTRICTIVE STANCE, AND ITS MAJOR CONCERN IS TO CONTINUE REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT; AGGRESSIVE ACTION TO REDUCE PRICES IS NOT UNDER CONSIDERATION. JAPANESE SAID THEY HAD A LOT LESS SPARE CAPACITY THAN SECRETARIAT SEEMED TO THINK, AND THEIR

RATE OF GROWTH IN FUTURE WOULD BE LESS THAN SECRETARIAT'S FORECAST, BECAUSE INVESTMENT WAS GOING INCREASINGLY INTO NON-PRODUCTIVE OUTPUT - HOUSING, IMPROVING ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE. SO IT WENT AROUND THE TABLE - WAILS THAT INFLATION WAS THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM AND SOMETHING MORE HAD TO BE DONE ABOUT IT.

5. POLICY ACTIONS: VIRTUALLY ALL MEMBERS AGREED PARADOXICALLY THAT THEIR POLICIES IN FORCE WERE NEVERTHELESS APPROPRIATE TO THEIR PARTICULAR CYCLICAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SITUATIONS. THE OTHER FELLOW NEEDED TO TAKE ACTION. AUSTRIA AND FINLAND WELCOMED LATEST GERMAN MEASURES. GOVERNOR BRIMMER'S DESCRIPTION OF THE FED'S NEW MEASURES OF MAY 16 WAS WELL RECEIVED. POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS TO FIGHT CURRENT OVERHEATING SEEMED TO FALL ROUGHLY INTO TWO CATEGORIES: (1) DEMAND MANAGEMENT HAD TO BE THE CENTRAL CORE OF ANY ARRAY OF POLICY ACTIONS TO FIGHT INFLATION EFFECTIVELY; AND (2) DEMAND MANAGEMENT MAY BE NECESSARY BUT IT WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO CURB INFLATION - PRICES AND INCOME POLICIES WERE ESSENTIAL. CEA CHAIRMAN STEIN, US REP, STATED THAT ANY EFFECTIVE ANTI-INFLATION POLICY HAD TO HAVE 95 PER CENT OF ITS WEIGHT IN DEMAND MANAGEMENT. OTHER POLICIES COULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED SUPPLEMENTARY. EPC'S CHAIRMAN (ALLEN), CANADA, AUSTRALIA, FRANCE, GERMANY AND SEVERAL OTHERS AGREED TO LARGE EXTENT WITH THIS LINE. HOWEVER, SCANDINAVIANS AND SOME SMALLER COUNTRIES STRONGLY RESISTED KEY ROLE FOR DEMAND MANAGEMENT. BELGIUM AND DENMARK NOTED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 04 OECD P 13920 01 OF 02 191207 Z

THAT TAX-PUSH INFLATION WAS PROBLEM FOR THEM, AND THAT CUTS IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURES (ALWAYS POLITICALLY DIFFICULT) HAD TO BE CONSIDERED. SEVERAL MEMBERS SAID THAT MORE FLEXIBLE EXCHANGE RATE ADJUSTMENT NOW OPENED UP POSSIBLE LINE ANTI-INFLATION ACTION, BUT IT HAD BEEN USED WITH CAUTION. MANY MEMBERS AGREED THERE SEEMED BE DANGEROUS TENDENCY ACCEPT AS MORE OR LESS NORMAL MORE RECENT HIGHER RATES OF INFLATION. MOST AGREED THERE WAS LITTLE CHANCE OF RETURNING TO LOW RATES OF 1960'S, BUT COUNTRIES HAD TO RETURN TO SOMETHING BETTER THAN CURRENT PRICE RISES OF 7 TO 9 PERCENT PER YEAR.

6. US COMMENTS: US DELEGATION PLAYED ITS USUAL KEY ROLE IN DISCUSSIONS. CHAIRMAN STEIN NOTED THAT US HAD LOWEST RATE OF INFLATION OF ANY MEMBER AND FOR FIRST TIME ITS VIGOROUS ATTACK ON INFLATION WAS BEING OFFSET BY IMPORTED VARIETY. HE DESCRIBED OUR RESTRICTIVE FISCAL POLICY STANCE AND POINTED OUT THAT A MODERATE MONETARY EXPANSION WAS ACTING AS BRAKE ON RAPIDLY GROWING ECONOMY. PRICES AND INCOMES POLICY HAD MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION LAST 1-1/2 YEARS. THE LARGE

SURGE IN PRICES WHEN POLICY SHIFTED FROM PHASE II TO

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PAGE 01 OECD P 13920 02 OF 02 191216 Z

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 NEA-10 ADP-00 RSR-01 AID-20 CEA-02

CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 INR-10 IO-12 NSAE-00

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XMB-07 NSC-10 SS-15 STR-08 INT-08 SCEM-02 AGR-20 /198 W
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R 190929 Z MAY 73

FM USMISSION OECD PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9653
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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PAGE 02 OECD P 13920 02 OF 02 191216 Z

PHASE III WAS LARGELY IN FOOD, WHICH HAD BEEN AND CON-

TINUED TO BE UNDER TOUGH MANDATORY CONTROLS. OTHER PRICE RISES WERE CONCENTRATED IN PETROLEUM, LUMBER AND NON- FERROUS METALS. WAGE BEHAVIOR HAD BEEN RESONABLE. GOVERNOR BRIMMER (FRB) CLEARED UP APPARENT MISUNDERSTANDING THAT MONETARY POLICY HAD ONLY RECENTLY BECOME RESTRICTIVE. HE DESCRIBED THE FED' S MEASURES OF MAY 16, AND STRESSED THESE WERE PART OF A CONTINUING POLICY OF RESTRAINT. THEY SHOULD ALSO ENCOURAGE EURO- DOLLAR REFLOW TO US. MONETARY POLICY WAS TIGHTER THAN MOST PEOPLE THOUGHT. HE ENVISAGED SOMEWHAT HIGHER SHORT- TERM RATES, WHICH WAS CONSISTENT WITH CURRENT MONETARY POLICY OBJECTIVES.

7. CONCERTED ACTION: EPC DISCUSSED AUSTRIAN PROPOSAL FOR " CONCERTED ACTION" AGAINST INFLATION. MAJOR COUNTRIES (INCLUDING US, FRANCE, GERMANY AND UK) WERE RELUCTANT TO COMMIT THEMSELVES TO ANY SPECIFIC PROGRAM. SMALLER COUNTRIES STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF LARGE COUNTRIES COMING TO GRIPS WITH THEIR INFLATIONARY SITUATIONS SO SMALLER COUNTRIES COULD THEN DO SAME. GENERAL CONSENSUS WAS THAT COUNTRIES HAVE DIFFERENT SITUATIONS WHICH CALL FOR INDIVIDUAL ACTION DEPENDING ON EACH COUNTRY' S OWN POLITICAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND CYCLICAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

8. AUSTRIA' S REP (DR. ZUK) OUTLINED " CONCERTED ACTION" WHICH HE ASKED BE CONSIDERED BY SECGEN FOR SUBMISSION COUNCIL OF OECD MINISTERS MEETING IN JUNE. HE SIAD MINISTERIAL ACTION THIS AREA WOULD HELP REINFORCE DOMESTIC ANTI- INFLATIONARY POLICIES.

9. COMPROMISE SOLUTION OFFERED BY PROF. DE WOLFF (WP-4 CHAIRMAN) PICKED UP MORE SUPPORT. HE SUGGESTED THAT INSTEAD OF CALLING FOR SIMULTANEOUS OR CONCERTED ACTION, SECRETARIAT SHOULD DRAW UP GRAB BAG OF POSSIBLE ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURES. COUNTRIES COULD SELECT THOSE APPROPRIATE TO THEIR RESPECTIVE CIRCUMSTANCES. US AND FRENCH REPS URGED IT BE MADE CLEAR THAT DEMAND MANAGEMENT IS KEY ELEMENT IN ANY ANTI- INFLATIONARY EFFORT; OTHER POLICIES SHOULD BE LISTED ONLY AS SUPPLEMENTARY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 03 OECD P 13920 02 OF 02 191216 Z

MEASURES. BASED ON THESE DISCUSSIONS, SECRETARIAT OUTLINED REPORT SECGEN PROPOSES SEND MINISTERS. IT WAS ACCEPTED WITH SOME QUALIFICATIONS BY MEMBERS.

10. BALANCE OF PAYMENTS: OORT REPORTED ON APRIL 30- MAY 1 MEETING OF WP-3; HAY, CHAIRMAN NEW COMMITTEE ON MONETARY AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE MATTERS, REPORTED ON ITS DISCUSSIONS MAY 15-16. CONCERNING CURRENT ACCOUNT PROSPECTS, SECRETARIAT (MARRIS) NOTED THAT MOST COUNTRIES' NATIONAL EXPERTS FORECAST EITHER SMALLER SURPLUSES OR

LARGER DEFICITS FOR THEIR COUNTRIES THAN SECRETARIAT IS FORECASTING. UK WAS ONLY COUNTRY THAT THOUGHT SECRETARIAT UNDULY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT ITS PROSPECTS. SECRETARIAT FELT NOW PROBABLE OUTCOME FOR FIRST HALF 1973 FOR CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCES WAS FIRST REAL ENCOURAGING SIGN THAT REALIGNMENT HAVING BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON TRADE VOLUMES. ALTHOUGH SPECIAL FACTORS WERE AT WORK (US AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS/ JAPANESE IMPORT STOCKPILING AND URANIUM PURCHASES), BILATERAL CURRENT BALANCE SITUATION BETWEEN US AND JAPAN WAS IMPROVING.

11. MARRIS STRESSED THAT ALTHOUGH TRADE BALANCES IN VOLUME TERMS IMPROVING, CHANGE IS SLOW AND IT MAY BE ANOTHER 12 MONTHS OR SO BEFORE EXCHANGE MARKETS ARE CONVINCED OF IMPROVEMENT. DECLINE OF US AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS IN SECOND HALF 1973 MIGHT WORSEN US BALANCE. SIZEABLE EQUILIBRATING CAPITAL FLOWS WERE NOT EXPECTED UNTIL CONFIDENCE IN DOLLAR RESTORED BY CURRENT ACCOUNT TURNAROUND. FURTHER SMALL CRISES WERE POSSIBLE, EVEN THOUGH PRESENT EXCHANGE RATES CORRESPOND TO ECONOMIC REALITIES. TRANSITION PERIOD CALLED FOR CAREFUL POLICIES, AND RECOGNITION INTER- RELATION BETWEEN DEMAND MANAGEMENT AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

12. US REP (LEDERER, TREAS.) NOTED THAT US DATA SHOWED IMPROVEMENT IN US CAPITAL ACCOUNT. FOREIGNERS HAD PURCHASED US STOCKS AT ANN. RATE OF \$7 BILLION IN LAST SIX MONTHS. US QUESTIONED STATISTICAL BASIS FOR SECRETARIAT' S JUDGMENT ABOUT IMPROVEMENT IN VOLUME OF US TRADE, AND NOTED THAT AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS EXPLAINED LARGE AMOUNT OF THE IMPROVEMENT. US REP (FIEDLER, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 04 OECD P 13920 02 OF 02 191216 Z

TREAS.) CITED FIRST QUARTER BALANCE OF PAYMENTS FIGURES, POINTED TO MODEST CAPITAL REFLOWS WHICH ARE TAKING PLACE, AND SAID BALANCE OF PAYMENTS HEADED IN RIGHT DIRECTION ALTHOUGH PACE OF EVENTUAL IMPROVEMENT IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT AT THIS TIME.

13. JAPANESE REP (INAMURA) SAW EVIDENCE IN MOST RECENT INDICATORS THAT BALANCE OF PAYMENTS' UNDERLYING TREND DEFINITELY CHANGING IN DESIRABLE DIRECTION. JAPANESE EXPECTED CONSIDERABLY LOWER CURRENT ACCOUNT SURPLUS IN 1973 THAN SECRETARIAT HAD EARLIER FORECAST, I. I., \$4.5-5.0 BILLION VS. \$7 BILLION. ALTHOUGH MONETARY POLICY SOMEWHAT MORE RESTRICTIVE, HE SAID DEMAND MANAGEMENT WOULD BE USED WITH FLEXIBILITY IN ORDER AVOID " UNDESIRABLE IMPACT" ON BALANCE OF PAYMENTS. SEVERAL DELEGATIONS WELCOMED JAPANESE MEASURES TO LIBERALIZE IMPORTS, BUT URGED JAPAN TO DO STILL MORE IN THIS AREA.

14. NUMBER OF DELS RAISED ISSUE OF EXCESS
LIQUIDITY BEING GENERATED OUTSIDE THEIR OWN
ECONOMIES, ADVERSELY AFFECTING THEIR ABILITY
TO COUNTER DOMESTIC INFLATION. SPECIAL ATTENTION
FOCUSED ON US AS SOURCE OF THIS. JAPANESE
RAISED QUESTION WHETHER OR NOT INTRODUCTION
OF FLEXIBLE EXCHANGE RATES WAS CONNECTED WITH
ACCELERATION OF INFLATION. SEC. NOTED PARADOX
IN THIS IDEA IN THAT COUNTRIES WITH GREATEST
REVALUATIONS WERE AMONG THOSE WITH HIGHEST
INFLATION RATES. US REP (FIEDLER) SAID US
DEVALUATION HAS SERVED TO MINIMIZE TRANSMISSION
OF ITS INFLATION ABROAD.

15. NEXT EPC MEETING SCHEDULED NOVEMBER 15-16.
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TAGS: ECON, EFIN, FR, OECD
To: STATE INFO ANKARA
ATHENS
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BRUSSELS
CANBERRA
COPENHAGEN

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HELSINKI
THE HAGUE
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